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# The Shhh! Shreds

## Selling Secret Documents by the Box

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"How will I be able to recognize you?" says the voice on the phone from Classified Associates. "Will you wear a badge on your lapel? Maybe a flower over your left ear?"

At the appointed hour, a man steps furtively into the Hot Shoppes restaurant on Wisconsin Avenue in Bethesda. He carries a trench coat, a briefcase and a threadbare hat, and wears imitation tortoise-shell sunglasses. He is a tall, hefty man in a sweat-stained shirt, a silver-haired man with—as anyone can see once he takes off the shades—searching blue eyes.

"I am sorry," he says. "Meeester Ackerman—he has been deetained elsewhere. My name is Alfredo Bechara from Colombia"—he proffers a soiled business card—"but that is only my secret cover. In thees beeesness, I must change my identity every 30 minutes."

The reporter has come expecting to meet with Army Maj. William Ackerman, 37, a defense analyst for the Army's Concepts Analysis Agency and, during his off-hours, a partner in Classified Associates, a Gai-

thersburg firm. The company's sole product—shredded secret documents—went on sale the other day at the Pentagon Book Store for \$3.95 a box.

But where is Major Ackerman? In his place has come this *character*, grinning an odd, unsettling grin.

"Are we bugged?" the man asks anxiously as he slips into a booth by the window and plops his briefcase on the table. "You are sure we are not bugged? Then you are wired, jes? You are not wired?"

He snaps the briefcase open to reveal a transparent plastic container. It is packed with tantalizing shreds of typescript.

"SECRET," warns the label under the logo of Classified Associates, a fierce-looking eagle inside a circle of stars and stripes.

"These documents contained SECRET information regarding areas of vital national security . . . This box has been sealed to prevent reassembly of its contents! To do so could present a security threat to the United States of America!"

The label bears the scrawl of a "verifying official" and a purplish ink stamp: Nov. 10 1983.

"Ah, jes, 10 November," the man says, breathing rapidly. "That was 'Thermonuclear War.'"

He grins goofily and holds up a second box. "Theees one is 30 November. That was 'Invasion of Canada.' Theees is very secret stuff. You are sure we are not bugged?"